

# LODI HISTORIAN

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 3

FALL 2013

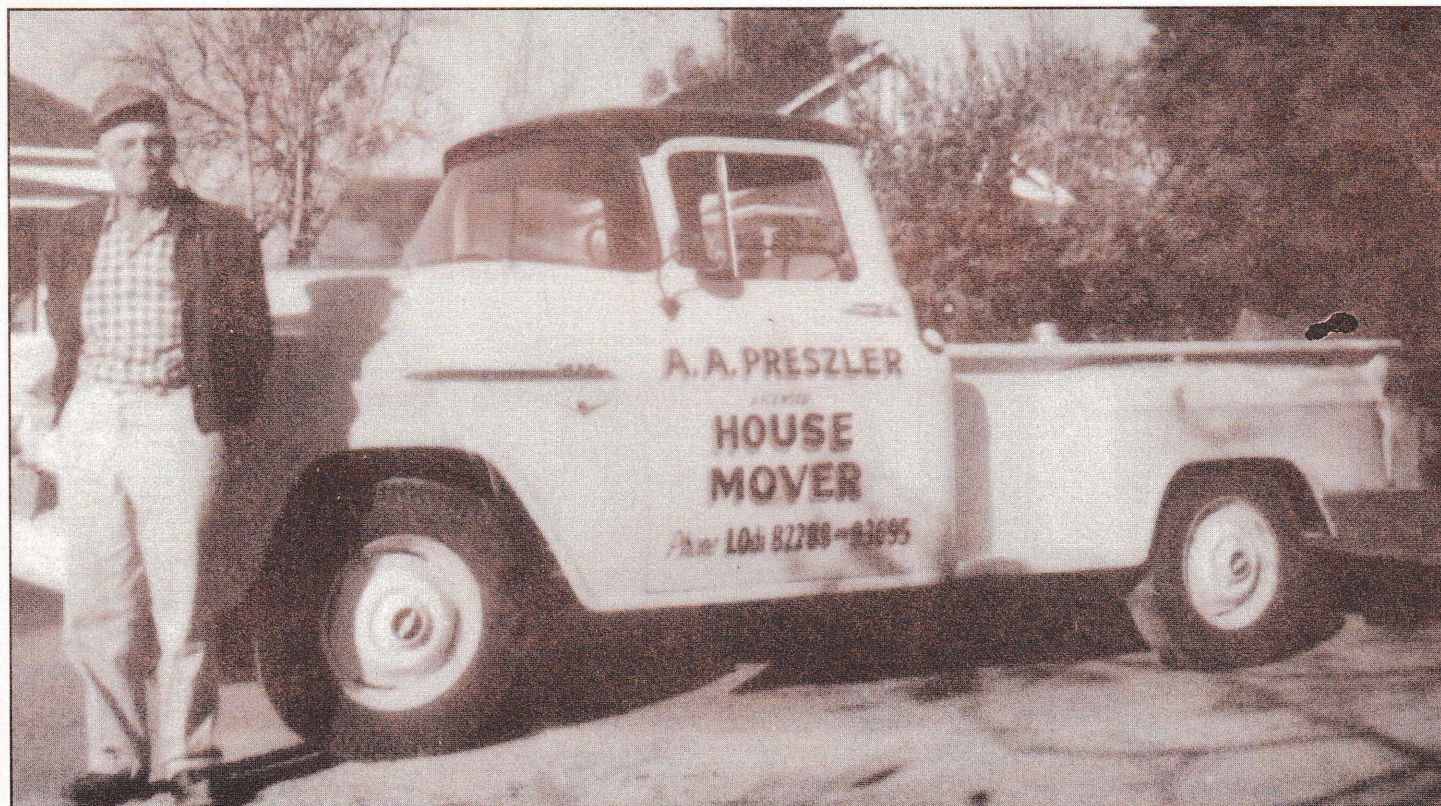
## PRESZLER HOUSE MOVING

*By Nancy Lea Schmer*

Three generations of the Adam A. Preszler family made their living moving homes, buildings, and even a lighthouse. Adam's German parents immigrated from Kassel, South Russia, arriving in America in the fall of 1884 with their first, young child. Their remaining 7 children were born in South Dakota. Adam was the fifth child and first son, born April 29, 1894 in South Dakota.

Adam and his siblings grew up on the family's homestead in McPherson County, South Dakota, near the town of Eureka. The Preszler's story was similar to that of the hundreds of other immigrant farmers, long hours and hard work. They farmed and tended to their farm animals. They met their difficulties with the same fortitude, and acquired security for themselves.

Tragically, Adam's first wife died shortly after the birth of their daughter, Alma. Adam then married Magdalena "Lena" Doerr and they made their home in Eureka, South Dakota. They welcomed their first son, Reuben Ervin Preszler, on February 3, 1918. Adam and Lena had four more children, Herbert, Lillian, Shirley, and Gertrude. Adam farmed and was active in the community,



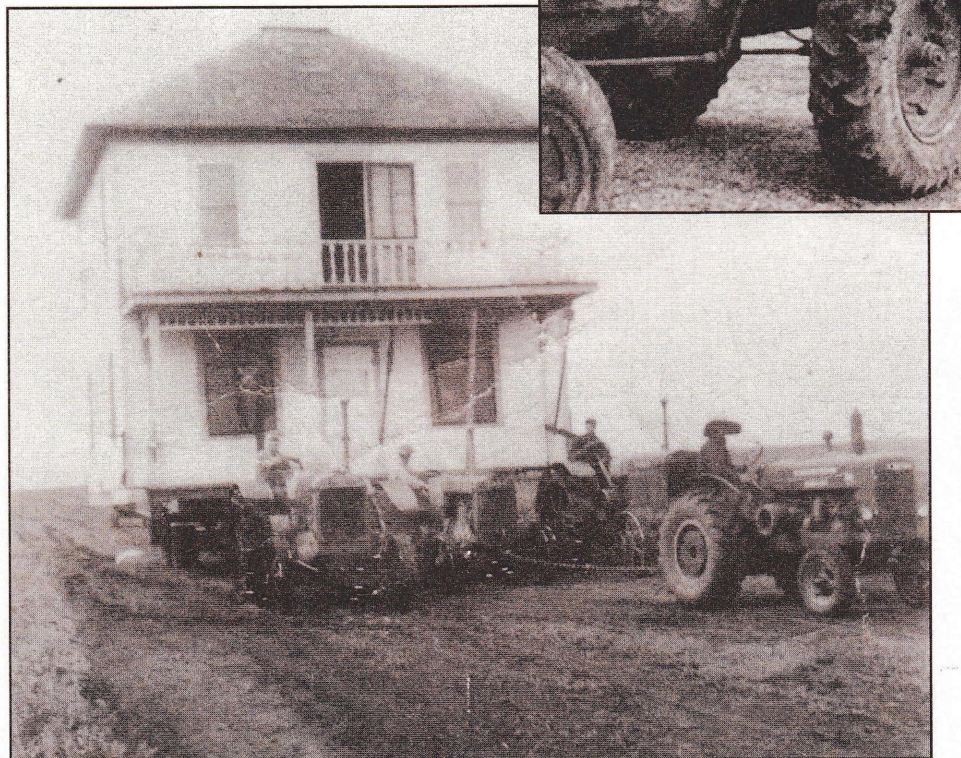
▲ Adam A. Preszler.



serving as county commissioner from 1939-1943.

He also started a house moving business, A. A. Preszler House Moving.

Since the 1800s, Americans have undertaken the complicated and delicate process of moving buildings. Originally, moving buildings was done for economic reasons and accom-



▲ House moving in South Dakota. Top photo: Adam Preszler with new tractor, farming in Eureka, South Dakota. This picture appeared in *Life Magazine*, August 2, 1937.

plished by lifting the house and positioning it onto hefty wooden framework. The wooden framework was either attached to large wheels and pulled by horses or oxen or could be set on wooden or iron rails and pulled. As the structure moved forward, the rails would be picked up from the rear of the building and reset ahead of the house.

Adam learned his trade well, moving entire buildings with all the furnishings still inside, including the clothes in the dresser drawers. His son, Reuben, worked alongside him, learning from the ground up through experience.

Reuben, now a young man, did not search far for a wife, he fell in love with Lucille Lapp and proposed marriage. Lucille, like Reuben, had lived her entire life in Eureka. She was born in a sod house to William and Magdalena Lapp on December 9, 1920. Reuben and Lucille married on November 23, 1941 in Eureka.

Adam's second son, Herbert, graduated from Eureka High School in 1940 and moved to California to work for the A&P Food Stores. Herbert also served in the U.S. Air Force during WWII. It was during Herbert's travels that he reported back to his father, Adam, that the

Victor area was an ideal place to live.

In 1944, Adam sold the family farm to his son Reuben and moved to Victor, California. That same year, Herbert married Emily Wolf, from Ashley, North Dakota. Newlyweds Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Preszler moved shortly thereafter to Victor. Their union produced four children, Herbert Jr., Carroll Vincent, Lina Grace, and Timothy.

About five years later, Reuben and his family also moved to Victor. They drove to California in their brand new light green 1950 Chevrolet Deluxe.

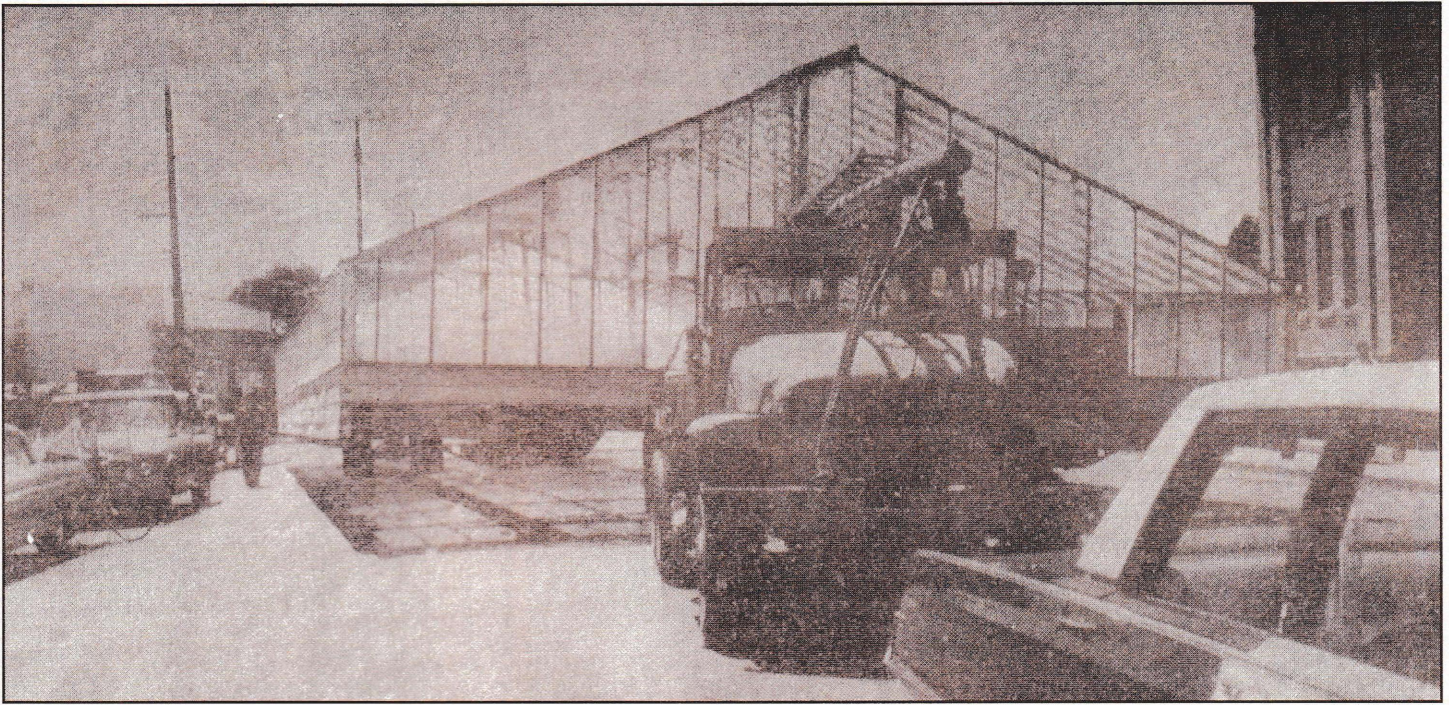
Reuben got right to work, building a shopping center on the main road through Victor. He included a 2 bedroom apartment in the rear for his family. Reuben and Lucille's little boys, Richard and Marlo, would soon be joined by brother Joey.

The shopping center was laid out length-wise east to west, with five equal sized spaces for businesses. The front doors faced north to Victor Road, also known today as East Highway 12. Reuben's brother, Herbert, moved his business, the Victor Hardware and Appliance, into the west-most space.

The next two spaces became a market. Reuben and Lucille Preszler opened the Victor Cafe in the next space to the east, which they ran for about seven years. When their son, Richard, took a break from peeling potatoes and washing dishes, he played out back, walking tight-rope atop the clothes line. The east-most space was occupied by a barbershop, with a separate office to the rear, used by Reuben. Later, another building was built to the east of the shopping center, housing Goehring Meat Company.

The shopping center still stands today, changes having been made over the years to combine some of the spaces.





▲ The newspaper headline read, "Those Who Move Glass Houses..." when house mover Reuben Preszler moved this 20 ton glass greenhouse, without so much as a crack in a single one of the myriad of window panes. When asked how he managed it, Reuben said, "We're movers, not wreckers!"

In addition to the cafe, Reuben Preszler remained working for his father.

Many buildings were moved from one location to another in Lodi and the outlying area. One particular building was moved twice by the Preszlers.

One of the notable projects the Preszlers completed was a 20-ton glass greenhouse moved from Baker's Nursery at the south-east corner of Lodi Avenue and Church Street. CVS Drugstore, formerly Long's Drugstore, is at that location today.

When Lodi Funeral Home moved into their new building at 725 South Fairmont Avenue, their former location at 225 South School Street was cleared out. The main floor was scheduled for demolition, as it was believed that no one would want to live in the former funeral parlor. However, the second story caretaker's apartment was lifted off and moved to Cooper's Corner in Acampo. The funeral home's owners, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel D. Salas, lived next door at 217 South School Street.

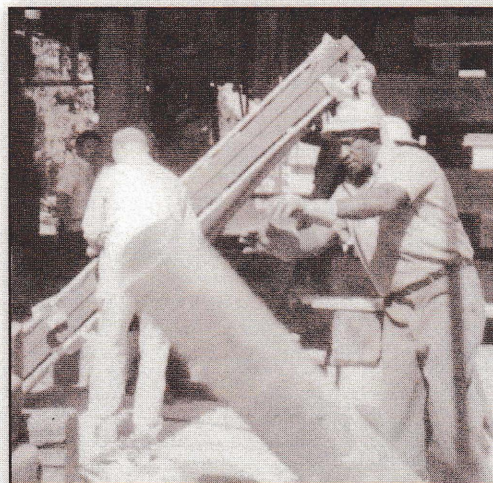
Their residence had previously been moved to the 1900 block South

Church Street. The former funeral home location at 225 South School Street is now a parking lot to Scrambl'z Restaurant, formerly Lyon's Restaurant.

A number of out of town jobs included the Tamarack Lodge when it

ings on Highway 99 in Stockton.

When Reuben's two oldest sons, Richard and Marlo, were old enough, they too worked in the family moving business. Richard recalls one instance when he was perched on the rooftop of a house being moved. The truck pulling the house would slow when it approached an obstacle, such as overhead electrical lines. Richard's



▲ From left to right: Marlo Preszler (in rear), Edwin Stein and Richard Preszler.

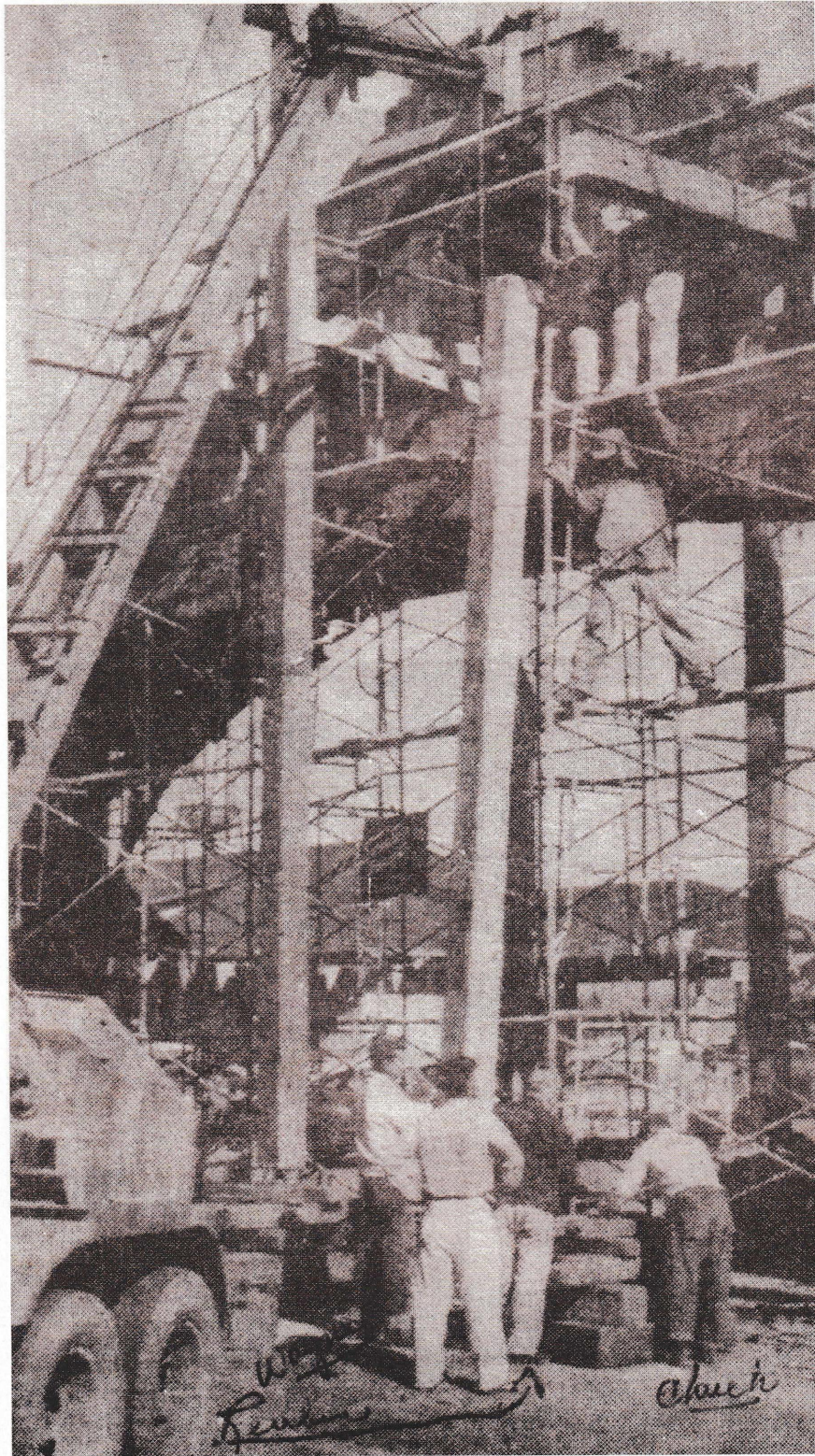
was moved back away from the newly widened Highway 4, the old Pine Grove School to a new location on Highway 88, and moving in and setting up many of the Pollardville Ghost Town build-



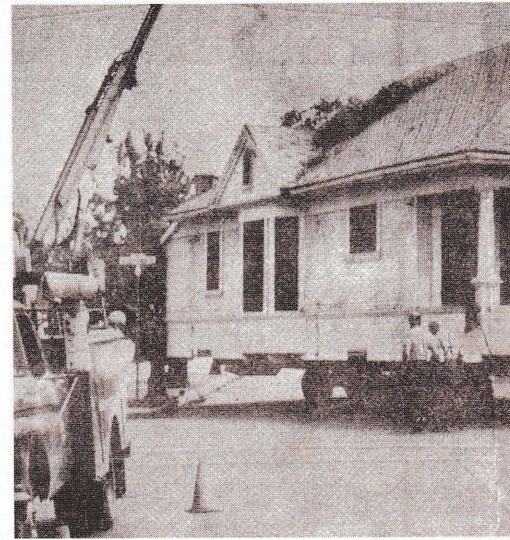
▲ Moving the second floor apartment off the Lodi Funeral Home. On left is Reuben, right is Adam and little Darren Preszler (Richard's son) stands behind the truck. The upper photo shows the original building.



# MAKING T



▲ **PROGRESS:** Work on Lodi's historic arch is going ahead at full speed as can be shown here with timbers being hoisted into place and the entire arch reconstructed prior to plastering. While workmen work on scaffolding a crane is pressed into use to hoist the heavy beams aloft. *Lodi News Sentinel* photo, Thursday, February 9, 1956.



▲ **HUMILERATIN' PREDICAMENT:** Stuck, that's what the house was, and right in the middle of the intersection, too, for over an hour, yet. Seems that the large frame structure was being moved by the Reuben Preszler house movers from 212 W. Elm St. to the 400 block of Louie Ave., when something went wrong at the turn on N. California St. only



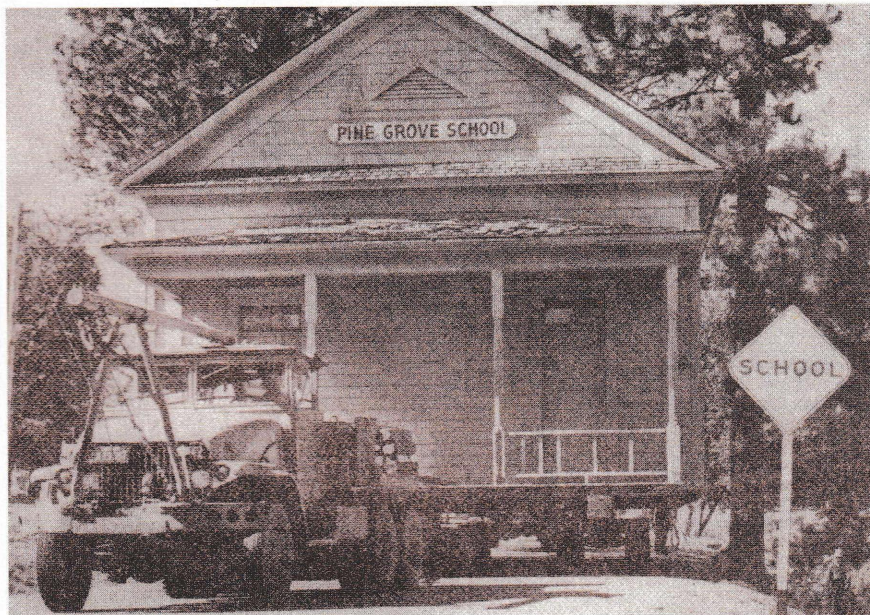
▲ **MOBILE HOME**—Lodi house-mover Reuben Preszler handled one of his biggest jobs yesterday when his firm wheeled the huge, two-story Pickering Apartments from its location at 207 W. Lodi Ave. to the 300 block of So. Church St. Preszler estimated the structure, which contained all its furnishings, weighed between 125 and 150 tons. The project started a week ago and the actual move, which took about three



# THE NEWS...

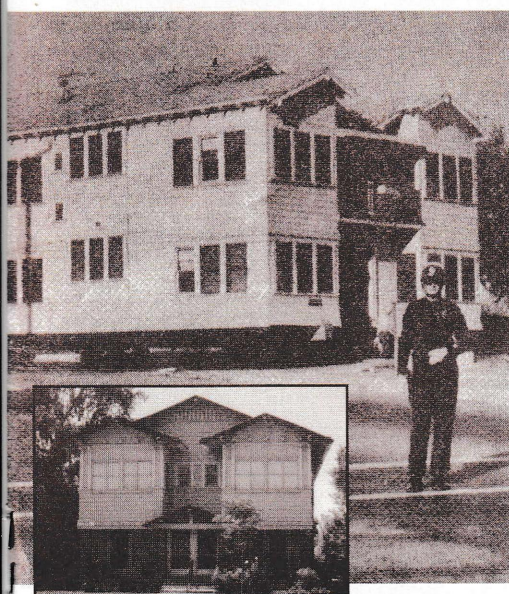


Louie. The house got stuck between a small walnut tree on the left, and a utility pole, on the right, causing traffic re-routing and consternation, to say the least. After 60 or so minutes of frantic maneuverings by the movers, the load got free and went to its destination without further ado. *News-Sentinel photo.*



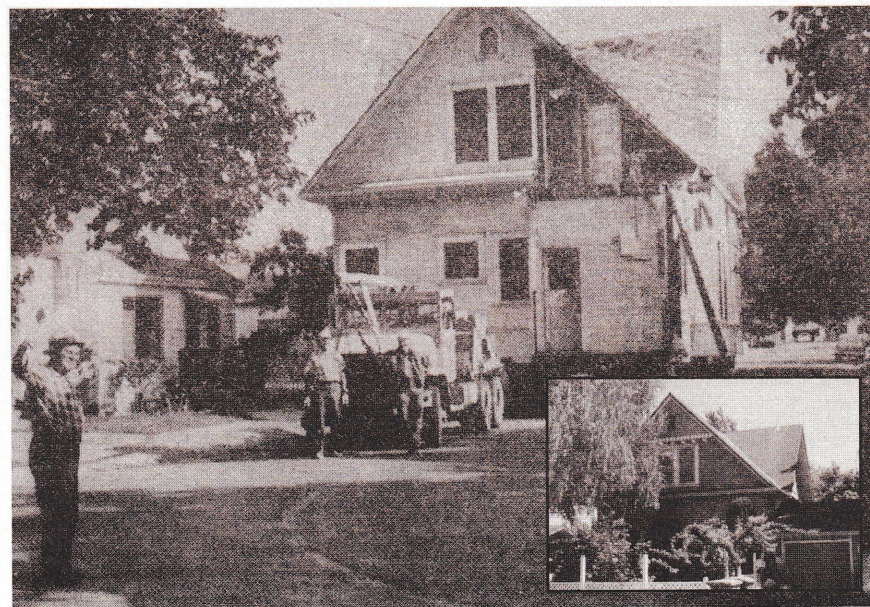
▲ **NEW SITE, NEW ROLE**—The old Pine Grove, Amador County, Elementary School, abandoned for educational purposes, was moved to a site on State Route 88 where its purchaser, Lester Buwaldi of Fair Oaks, plans

to remodel it and use it for an antique shop. Amador residents hoped to have it declared an historical landmark until a recheck showed the building is 66 years old instead of the 108 popularly supposed. *Bee photo.*



hours to move one block, is the second of three moving jobs from that location. The Wells home on the corner of Church and Lodi Ave. was moved a few weeks ago, and the Warren Mantz home will be the last to be moved as the northwest corner of the intersection is cleared for construction of a Humble Oil Co. service station. Inset shows the structure today.

*News-Sentinel photo.*



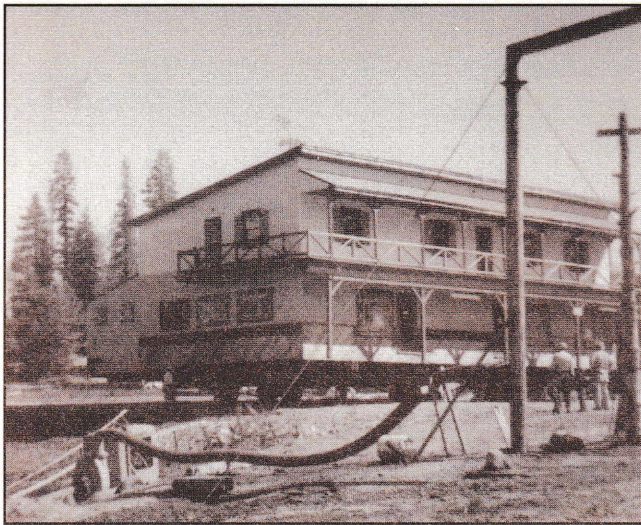
▲ **'EYESORE' MOVED**—"Here we go again," said Lodi house mover Reuben Preszler, foreground, yesterday morning when this house was taken from 939 Wellswood Ave. to 636 Joaquin Street in the Pioneer Subdivision between Cherokee Lane and the Highway 99 freeway. The house has been the subject of a controversy since Maurice Ray, Jr. purchased it for \$1 to make way for the new Public Safety

Building. Ray moved the house to the Wellswood Avenue location in August, 1966 and then was told by the city the house could not stay there because of zoning regulations. Area residents objected to the structure, terming it an "eyesore," and the city finally agreed to pay Ray \$2,300 to move the structure.

*News-Sentinel photo.*

*Inset: The home today at 636 Joaquin Street.*





▲ Moving Tamarack Lodge.

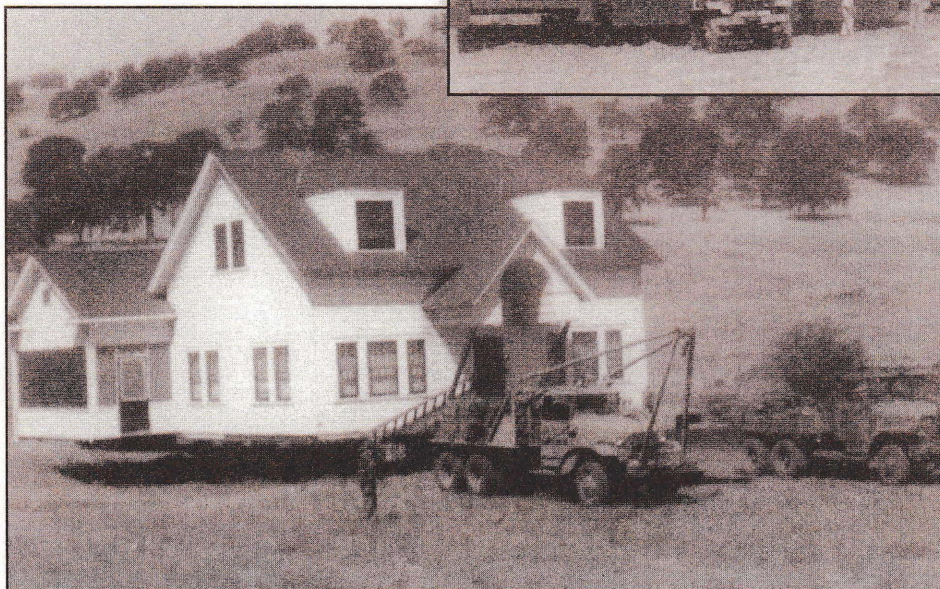
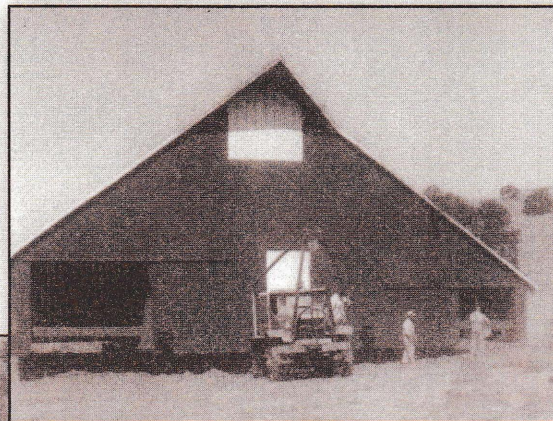
job was to lift the wires up with an insulated stick as the house moved underneath. There were pine needles on the roof and during the move, Richard slipped down the pitch toward the towing mechanism connecting the truck to the house. Luckily for Richard, at the last minute he was able to leap the span from the rooftop to the truck bed. When the driver turned around, he was quite surprised to see Richard there.

Marlo Preszler recalled a humorous incident whereby a house was moved off its old parcel and temporarily parked on a lot near Victor and Beckman Roads. Due to the late-

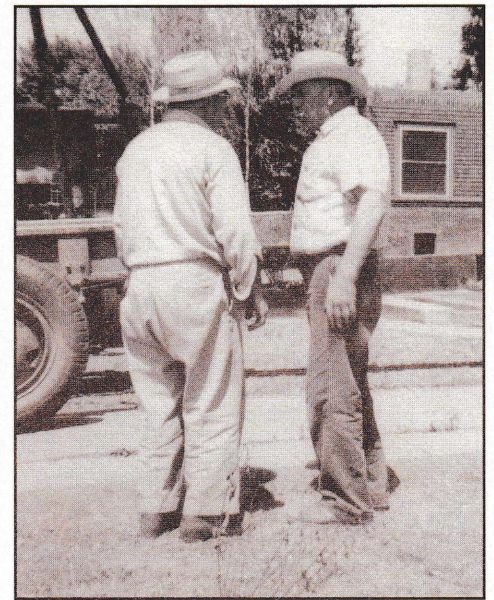
ness of the day, Marlo's father, Reuben, said they would transport the house to its new home the following morning. The man that owned the home asked if it would be ok to sleep in the house overnight. Reuben told him yes, as long as the man and his family were out by 7:30 a.m. the next morning. The next morning, Reuben

and his crew hooked up the house and went off down Victor Road. Soon after, the family awoke and walked out their front door to the front porch and began waving wildly. The procession came to a stop and Marlo drove the family back to their car.

One of the most challenging



▲ George Beggs' Ranch, house and barn, being moved to accommodate Comanche Dam construction.



▲ Reuben and Adam Preszler.

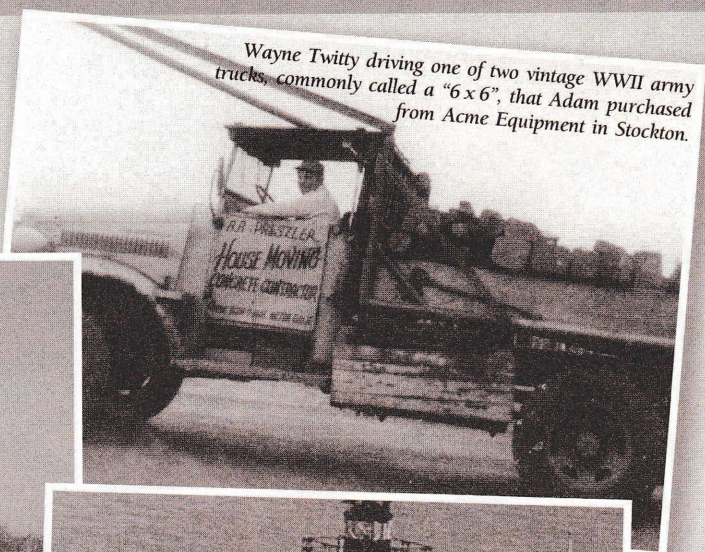
moves was relocating a lighthouse from north of San Francisco to Stockton. The Southhampton Shoal Lighthouse was a unique three-story Victorian structure that rested on eleven steel cylinders driven into the shoal. Completed in 1905, the lighthouse was in operation until 1960, when it was determined that a manned station was no longer required. The top two stories of the lighthouse were lifted off the pilings by giant cranes and then barged up the delta to Tinsley Island in Stockton.

The island had been purchased by San Francisco's St. Francis Yacht Club in 1959, and the Southhampton Shoal Lighthouse became an inn for club members visiting the outstation. Adam Preszler, his son Reuben, two grandsons Richard and Marlo, and a small crew of men were waiting for the lighthouse when it arrived by barge at Tinsley Island. The tide was rising and when the barge started tilting, Reuben ordered his sons to remove their trousers and enter the water to help level the barge. After a few tense moments, the lighthouse was pulled off the barge and onto its new location.



## MOVING A LIGHTHOUSE

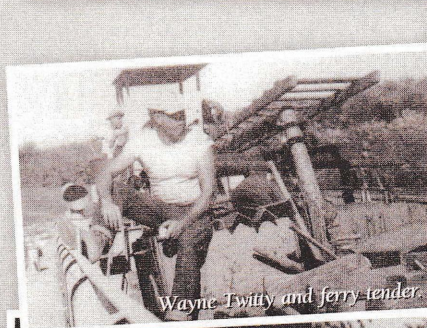
Moving The Southhampton Shoal Lighthouse was one of the most challenging moves for the Preszlers.



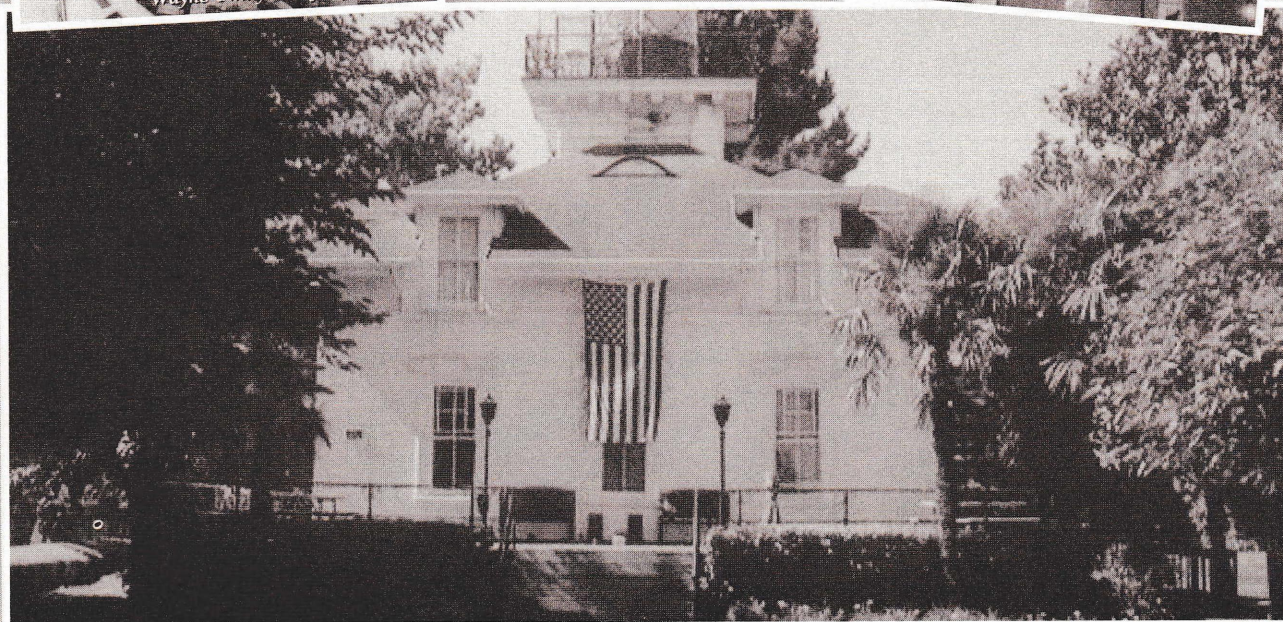
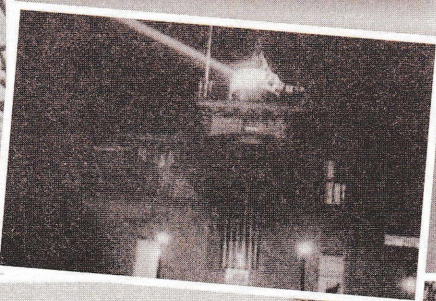
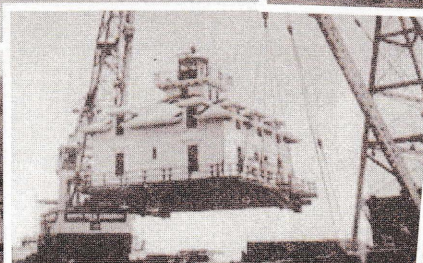
Wayne Twitty driving one of two vintage WWII army trucks, commonly called a "6x6", that Adam purchased from Acme Equipment in Stockton.



Left to right: Edwin Stein (bent over), Henry Meyer and Marlo Preszler.



Wayne Twitty and ferry tender.





Marlo Preszler later stated that his father, Reuben, who normally chewed tobacco, chewed "more than usual" on that day, but he never lost his composure.



▲ Adam Preszler, Lockeford 1952.

Reuben Preszler eventually took over the business from his father Adam, renaming it R. E. Preszler House Moving. Reuben retired in 1971. Adam Preszler passed away August 1, 1973. Reuben and Lucille Preszler died in 1993 and 2005 respectively. Herbert Preszler Sr. passed in 2009. Reuben and Lucille's sons went into different lines of work after their father retired, but never forgot all the experiences the three generations shared.

### References

Richard & Sandy Preszler • Marlo Preszler  
Thanks to Sally for layout

### THE LODI HISTORIAN

is a quarterly publication of the Lodi Historical Society  
P.O. Box 264, Lodi, CA 95241-0264

Editor Nancy Lea Schmer

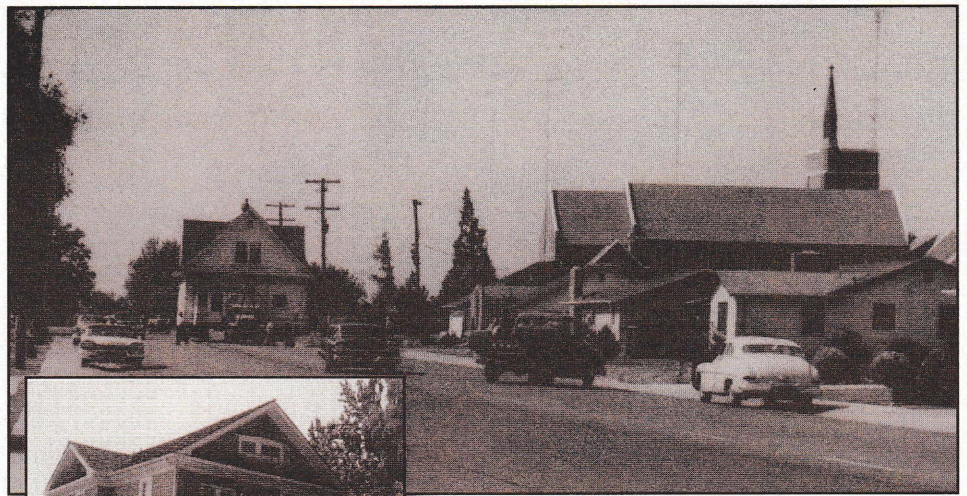
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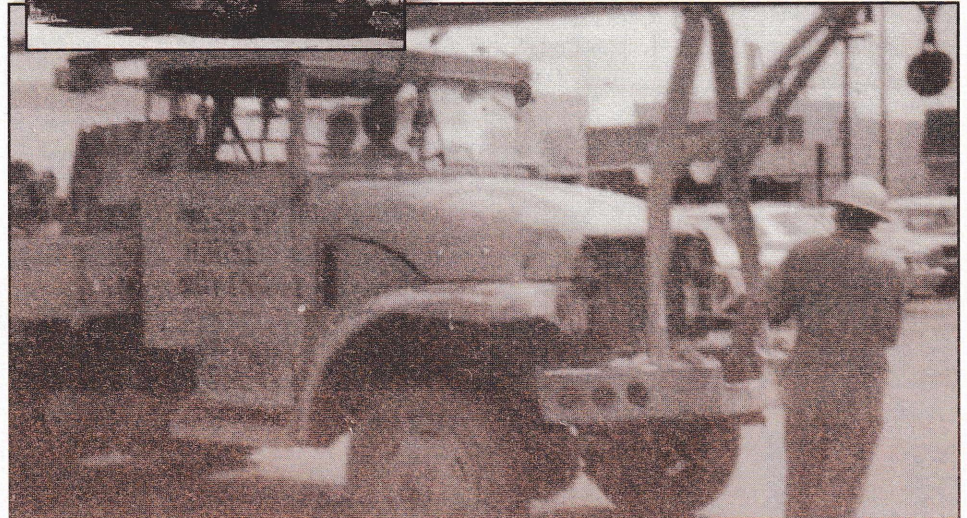
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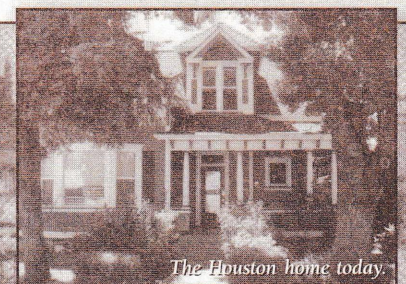
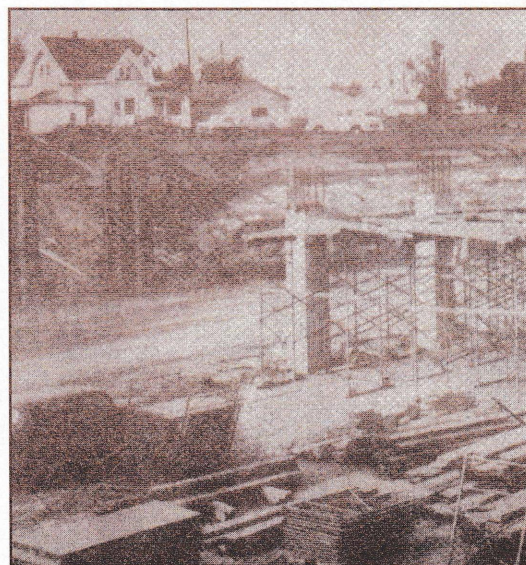
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▲ House moved from Long John Silver's lot to Turner Road.  
Left: House as it stands today on Turner Road.



▲ Leonard Metcalf in front of the truck, inside the cab are Marlo and Darren Preszler.



The Houston home today.



### ▲ THERE'S BEEN SOME CHANGES MADE—

The old Houston house on East Pine Street used to sit quietly and watch the world go by (lower inset). After being moved, it served as headquarters for Teichert Construction Co. project contractors working on the Pine Street overpass for Highway 99. News-Sentinel Photo.